

THE COMPASSIONATE CHRIST.

By Theodore L. Cuyler, D. D.

There is no place in which human sorrows are felt as they are felt in the heart of Jesus. No one knows human weakness as he knows it, or pities as he can pity. Every suffering of the body is known to our sympathizing Lord, and every grief that makes the heart ache. Human pity is often worn out from overuse. It impatiently mutters, "Is that poor creature here again? I have helped him a dozen times already." Or it says, "That miserable fellow has taken to drink again, has he? I am done trying to save him. He makes himself a brute; let him die like the brutes!" Human pity often gives way just when it should stand the heaviest strain.

Compassion dwells in the heart of Christ, as inexhaustible as the sunlight. Our tears hang heavier on that heart than the planets which his divine hand holds in their orbits; our sighs are more audible to his ear than the blasts of wintry winds are to us. When we pray aright, we are reaching up and taking hold on that compassion. The penitent publican was laying hold of it when he cried out of that broken heart, "Be merciful to me, a sinner!" It is his sublime pity that listens to our prayers and hears our cries and grants us what we want. Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace and make our weakness, our guiltiness, and our griefs to be their own pleas to him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. One of the most characteristic stories of Abraham Lincoln is that a poor soldier's wife came to the White House, with her infant in her arms, and asked admission to see the President. She came to beg him to grant a pardon to her husband, who was under a military sentence. "Be sure and take the baby up with you," said the Irish porter at the White House door. At length the woman descended the stairway, weeping for joy; and the Irishman exclaimed, "Ah, mum, it was the baby that did it!"

So doth our weakness appeal to the compassionate heart of our Redeemer. There is no more exquisite description of him than in this touch: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom; he shall gently lead those that are with young." Such is our blessed Master's tender mercy to the weak. It is tender because it never breaks the bruised reed or quenches the feeblest spark. This world of ours contains vastly more weak things than strong things. Here and there towers a mountain pine or stalwart oak; but the frail reeds and rushes are innumerable. Even in the Bible gallery of characters how few are strong; yea, none but had some weakness. Abraham's tongue is once twisted to a falsehood; the temper of Moses is not always proof against provocation; Elijah loses heart under the juniper tree, and boastful Peter turns poltroon under the taunts of a servant-maid. But evermore there waits and watches over us that infinite compassion that knows what is in poor man, and remembereth that we are but dust. For our want-book he has an infinitely larger supply-book. The same sympathizing Jesus who raised the Jewish maiden from her bed of death,

who rescued sinking Peter, and pitied a hungry multitude, and wept with the sisters of Bethany ere he raised a dead brother to life, is living yet. His love, as old Rutherford said, "hath neither brim nor bottom."

This compassionate Jesus ought to be living also in the persons of those whom he makes his representatives. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." That law is love. This law of Christian sympathy works in two ways: it either helps our fellow-creatures get rid of their burdens, or, if failing in that, it helps them to carry the load more lightly. We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Here, for example, is a strong, rich, well-manned church; some of its members are dying of dignity and others are debilitated with indolence. Yonder is a feeble church in numbers and money. Let the man who counts one in the strong church go where he can count ten in the weak church. If the compassionate Christ should come into some of our churches, I suspect that he would order more than one rich, well-fed member off his cushion, and send him to work in some mission school or struggling young enterprise.

That early Church was saturated with the compassionate spirit of their Lord. They fulfilled the "law of Christ." The only genuine successors of those apostles are the load-lifters. The second coming of Christ in these days must be in the persons of those who bear the burdens of the weak, condescend to men of low estate, and seek out and save the lost. One great need of the times is for rich people and cultured people to understand their duty and do it; otherwise wealth and culture is a snare and a curse. Jesus Christ exerted His divine might and infinite love in bearing the load of man's sin and sorrows. Consecration means copying the compassionate Christ. Power means debt—the debt we owe to the poor, the feeble, the sick, the ignorant, the fallen, the guilty and the perishing. May God inspire us, and help us to pay that debt!

Brooklyn, N. Y.

MY TASK.

By Edward Everett Hale.

Not mine to mount to courts where seraphs sing,
Or glad archangels soar on outstretched wings;
Not mine in union with celestial choirs
To sound heaven's trump or strike the gentler wires;
Not mine to stand enrolled at crystal gates,
Where Michael thunders or where Uriel waits.
But lesser worlds a Father's kindness know;
Be mine some simple service here below—
To weep with those who weep, their joys to share,
Their pain to solace or their burdens bear;
Some widow in her agony to meet;
Some exile in his new-found home to greet;
To serve some child of Thine, and so serve Thee.
Lo, here am I! To such a work send me!

Often consider and contemplate the joys of heaven, that when they have filled thy desires, which are the sails of the soul, thou mayest steer only thither and never look back.—Jeremy Taylor.